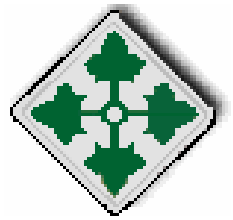




DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
Headquarters, 2nd Battalion (Mechanized), 8th Infantry
4th Infantry Division (Mechanized)
Forward Operating Base Kalsu, North Babil, Iraq



16 May 2006

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Tiwanda Monique Johnson. I was born in Marion, South Carolina on 26 July, 1986. I was raised by my mother and father in Mullins, South Carolina. When I was a little girl, my father talked about his wartime stories and the time that he served in the Military. He also talked about how he survived during the war and fighting for your country was a good deed. After listening to those stories, I knew that a career in the Military was what I really wanted to do.

The feeling at wartime is very interesting for me as a young Soldier, but at the same time it can be very scary. Not making it back home with the Soldiers you deployed with and knowing that something can happen to you at any time is scary. Trusting in God is the key to survival, but at the same time you have to remember your training and listen to your leaders.

Life on Forward Operating Base Kalsu has been very exciting and at the same time creepy. When we first got here, I thought life was going to be very hard for me and that someone was going to get hurt. After looking around I now see that we are all well protected. The chow is good and the gym is getting broader as we get further into this deployment. The local nationals are very polite and excited that we are here to help them through these hard times. You have to look at things this way; be friendly to all and trust no one.

I do not work with the Iraqi's hand in hand, but have a major involvement in supporting their mission. I help keep the Battalion's equipment mission capable, which in turn helps our Battalion work with and help train the Iraqi Army. On one occasion, I worked with some local nationals set up some desert shades, but that was the only experience that I had with our Iraqi counterparts.

Tiwanda M. Johnson
Specialist, US Army